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THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES

ADDRESS

OF

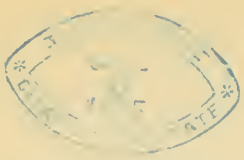
BREVET MAJ.-GENERAL RUTHERFORD B. HAYES

AT THE

FIFTH QUADRENNIAL CONGRESS

CHICAGO ILLINOIS

APRIL 17th 1885



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Fifth Quadrennial Congress of the Order, Chicago, April 15–17, 1885.

Extract from the minutes:—

Brevet Major-General E. W. Hinks, representative from Massachusetts.

Resolved, That the remarks of our Acting Commander and presiding officer be printed and forwarded to the several Commanderies of the Order.

The resolution was unanimously adopted.

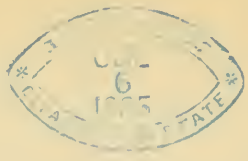
Attest:

JOHN P. NICHOLSON,
Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, U. S. V.,
Acting Recorder-in-Chief.

Companions, this motion will close the business of the Congress. I am greatly obliged to the representatives of the various commanderies for their kindness and support during the performance of unfamiliar duties, and I trust that the acquaintance now made, and the fraternal regard which will date back to the meeting of this Congress, are to continue as long as we shall live. I feel assured that all who shall be informed of the facts will be satisfied that there has been a degree of harmony, of good temper, and of fairly good judgment in our action which is entirely worthy of the order to which we belong. I trust that it will be discovered that this is true of our work; and to be worthy of this order is certainly the highest praise. For we believe—we begin to feel sure—that the order of the Loyal Legion that was established in 1865, on the 15th of April, in the midst of the deep gloom that then fell upon the country, is to be entirely worthy of the good cause in which it had its origin,—a cause which may be said to be, as was said of the Revolutionary war by Emerson,—"a spotless cause."

Indeed, it was the best—the divinest—cause for which men ever went to war. We ourselves did not fully appreciate the cause for which we were risking our lives when we were engaged in the great conflict. It is certainly true of this war, that it stands alone in the wars of all history, as the one war that accomplished all—completely and exactly—that the friends of the right wished and sought when they were forced to take up arms. It established the Union; it maintained the supremacy of the General Government; it abolished slavery. This was all that we then thought of. But it can be said further, if wars are to be judged by their results, that our war was the greatest war in all history. Its results have transcended immeasurably the most sanguine anticipations of those who took part in it. It is our good fortune to have fought on the right side in our country's time of need. The four years of the war are therefore the best years of our lives. Those years are indeed golden. The inheritance which that service enables us to leave to those who shall come after us, is an inheritance more precious than the best success in accumulating wealth, or the highest gratification of ambition for civil honors. Think of the war and its results. The vanquished now admit, in every form, that they have gained by this war more than it can be shown that the victor in any other war ever gained by the most complete and brilliant triumph.

The brave men of the South who fought against us are now ready with us to stand guard around the couch and the home of the illustrious soldier by whom they were beaten at Donelson and Shiloh, Vicksburg and Mission Ridge, Richmond and Appomattox, and fervently to pray with us, God bless General Grant. But, companions, I must not detain you. I trust you will have safe and agreeable journeys to your homes, and that there you will find that your families have enjoyed the protection and blessing of the Divine Being who holds in his hand the lives and destinies of individuals and of nations.



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